

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Presently Amended) A surgical instrument for piercing and cutting tissue and creating a ~~percutaneous~~ path to bone comprising:

a shaft having a longitudinal axis and proximal and distal ends having

a length sufficient to create a percutaneous path to bone,

a cross-section normal to the longitudinal axis,

a plurality of surfaces aligned with the longitudinal axis, and

a tip on the distal end of the shaft, the tip having

a plurality of facets that intersect to form a point for piercing tissue, at least two of the facets intersecting to form an edge for cutting tissue, and

at least one other surface adjoining the cutting edge,

wherein, the cross-section of the shaft varies along the length of the shaft, and a first cross-section at a first location along the length of the shaft has a first area and a second cross-section at a second location along the length of the shaft has a second area, the first area greater than the second area, and the second location is situated between the first location and proximal end of the shaft.

2. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the first cross-section is polygonal.

3. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 2, wherein the second cross-section is polygonal.

4. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 3, wherein the first and second cross-sections have substantially similar shape.

5. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 4, wherein the first and second cross-sections are aligned along the longitudinal axis of the instrument.

6. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 5, wherein the first cross-section has a perimeter having six sides.
7. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein at least one facet has a substantially planar surface.
8. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the plurality of surfaces on the shaft comprise at least two substantially planar surfaces.
9. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 8, wherein one or more of the plurality of surfaces on the shaft are inclined with respect to the longitudinal axis.
10. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 9, wherein one or more of the plurality of surfaces on the shaft are oblique with respect to the longitudinal axis.
11. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 8, wherein the at least two substantially planar surfaces are parallel.
12. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the shaft tapers from a third location to the second location.
13. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 12, wherein the third location has a third cross-section, the third cross-section having a shape different than the second cross-section.
14. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 13, wherein the third cross-section is non polygonal.
15. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 14, wherein the third cross-section comprises a curved perimeter.

16. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 15, wherein the third cross-section is substantially circular.

17. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the proximal end of the shaft comprises a handle attachment site.

18. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 17, further comprising a handle for manipulating the surgical instrument.

19. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 18, wherein the handle is lobe shaped.

20. (Previously Presented) The surgical instrument of claim 19, wherein the handle is releasably secured to the handle attachment site.

21. (Presently Amended) The surgical instrument of claim 20, wherein the handle attachment site comprises a substantially flat surface and a groove.

22. (Presently Amended) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the tip is unsymmetrical.

23. (Presently Amended) The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the shaft is substantially symmetrical.

24. (Presently Amended) A surgical instrument for separating tissue and creating a percutaneous path to bone comprising:

a shaft having a longitudinal axis and proximal and distal ends, the shaft having

a length sufficient to create a ~~percutaneous~~ path to bone,

a cross-section normal to the longitudinal axis;

at least two surfaces substantially aligned with the longitudinal axis, and  
a tip connected to the distal end of the shaft, the tip having  
a plurality of facets that form a surface for separating tissue, at least two of  
the facets intersecting to form a curved edge, and  
at least one other surface adjoining the curved edge and facets,  
wherein, the cross-section of the shaft varies along the length of the shaft, and a first cross-  
section at a first location along the length of the shaft has a first area and a second cross-section at a  
second location along the length of the shaft has a second area, the first area greater than the second  
area, and the second location is situated between the first location and the proximal end of the shaft.